

126. *Taczanowski on the Birds of Kamtschatka.*

[Liste des Oiseaux recueillies par le Dr. Dybowski au Kamtschatka et dans les îles Comandores. *Tom. cit.* p. 419.]

Out of these collections sent by Dr. Dybowski, only two, containing the smaller birds, have arrived, the birds of prey and the sea-birds having been more than a year on their way ; so that this Catalogue is issued subject to revision. The peninsula of Kamtschatka is stated to be very poor in land-birds, both as regards species and numbers ; and although not persecuted they are remarkably shy. The list contains 67 species, *Sitta albifrons* being described as new, and characterized by its long bill and white edge to the wing-coverts. Only a few species appear to have been obtained on the Comandores, one of them being *Corydalla gustavi*, Swinh., which nests there.

127. *Tschusi zu Schmidhofen and E. F. von Homeyer on Austro-Hungarian Birds.*

[Verzeichniss der bisher in Oesterreich und Ungarn beobachteten Vögel. Von Victor Ritter von Tschusi zu Schmidhofen in Verbindung mit Eug. Ferd. von Homeyer.]

A list of the 394 species of birds found in Austria and Hungary, drawn up in six columns, with the Latin and German, Hungarian, Bohemian, Polish, Croatian, and Italian vernacular names (where such exist) for each. Up to a certain point this polyglot version may be useful to ornithologists in coming to an understanding with the people of the country.

XLII.—*Letters, Announcements, &c.*

Ordnance Office, Dublin,
20th August, 1883.

SIRS,—Understanding that much interest is felt in the breeding-habits of the Rose-coloured Starling (*Pastor roseus*), more commonly called the Locust-bird in the East, I have the pleasure of sending you a few notes on that subject.

I had frequently seen the Locust-bird, or Russet Starling (called by the Moslems "Ala Segherjik"), in Asia Minor; but I came across one of their breeding-places, for the first time, on the 26th May, 1881, when visiting the large quarries from which the celebrated Synnadic or Docimian marble was obtained. These quarries are about two miles from Ichjé Kara-hissar (Docimian), shown on Kiepert's map as Eski Kara-hissar, to the north-east of Afium Kara-hissar. The bottom and slopes of the quarries are covered with loose stones of all sizes, the débris left by the quarrymen; and it was under these stones that the birds had made their nests. The nests consisted in some cases of a few dried blades of grass arranged in a shallow hollow in the rubbish; but, as a rule, the eggs appeared to have been laid on any spot where the ground offered a fairly smooth surface. Each nest contained six eggs of a pure, or slightly bluish, white; I tried to blow some of the eggs, but in each case found the chick fully formed and nearly ready to hatch. The whole quarry was alive with birds; at each step a flight started up from the débris, and the chattering noise they made was quite deafening; their habits reminded me in many ways of those of the English Starling. A few Jackdaws and the Common Starling were also breeding in the quarries. The people of Ichjé Kara-hissar told me that the birds had suddenly appeared two years previously and taken possession of the quarries as if they had always bred there.

On the 3rd June, 1881, shortly before reaching Sivri-hissar, my attention was attracted by the number of Locust-birds in the air, and, on looking closer, I found that they formed two streams, one above the other, coming from and returning to the high volcanic rocks behind the town; the birds in the upper stream were going to an army of young locusts, and those in the lower were returning, each with as many locusts as it could carry. I heard afterwards that the birds were breeding in the rocks, but did not visit the place: judging from the fact that the old birds were carrying locusts home to their nests, the young must have been hatched.

On the 7th June, 1881, I found another breeding-place of

the Locust-bird at Bulkuyunjuk, a village near Angora. It was a most curious and interesting sight; the birds had arrived four days previously and literally taken possession of the village, the houses and garden-walls of which are built of loose stones. The birds were running in and out of the loose stones, building their nests, and the walls of the mosque, houses, and gardens were full of them; numbers, too, were taking a bath in the spring and stream or sunning themselves after it; they were very tame, and seemed to be on excellent terms with the people, who were only too glad to have them, as the country round was covered with locusts. The noise was almost greater than at the quarries of Ichjé Kara-hissar.

The quickness with which the Russet Starling seizes the locusts, both on the ground and in the air, is very striking, and I know of few prettier sights than that of a flock of Locust-birds attacking an army of locusts on the wing; the birds dash through the air with almost inconceivable rapidity, seeming to the natives as if they were possessed by some divine fury, and strike the locusts as they pass on the nape of the neck, sometimes almost severing the head from the body. In the younger stages of the locusts the birds feed upon them; but when the locusts reach the size of a large grasshopper and afterwards the flying stage, the Starlings appear to kill them for mere amusement or in obedience to some unknown instinct. The Russet Starling is a very voracious and almost omnivorous bird, and it is almost as much dreaded for the damage which it does to the fruit as welcomed for its enmity to the locust; I had a good example of this on one occasion when I found flocks of young birds stripping the fruit-trees between Tocat and Amasia. I have never seen the Locust-bird in winter, and believe it is migratory in Asia Minor; the natives always told me that the birds appeared suddenly in dense flocks, and that they were rarely known to remain more than three consecutive summers in the same place. I am unable to explain why the birds were so much later in arriving at Bulkuyunjuk, as the altitude and climate are much the same as at the other two breeding-places.

C. W. WILSON, R.E., F.R.S.

Tudor House, Champion Hill, S.E.

August 17, 1883.

SIRS,—As I find that you have referred in 'The Ibis' to what I told Dr. Pechuel Loesche at Banana respecting the presence of *Baleniceps rex* on the Cunéné, I beg leave to send you the following extract from my diary respecting this bird:—"River Cunéné, near Humbi (lat. 16° 50' S.), August 16th 1882. There are here many acres of dried-up marshes and occasional lagoons shaded with fine trees. On these racches of still water innumerable wading birds are seen, and have a boldness of demeanour only accountable for by the supposition that man rarely comes here. Pelicans, Saddle-billed and Marabou Storks, *Baleniceps rex*, and Crowned Cranes are to be distinctly seen amid the short grass of the scattered pools," &c., &c. And further on: "On these sand-banks, amid the sleeping crocodiles, and apparently in no fear of them, were standing one or two *whale-headed* Storks and Spur-winged Geese." On my return from the Cunéné to Lord Mayo's hunting-veldt, about 40 miles off, I mentioned *Baleniceps* to him among the birds I had observed, and I believe he subsequently saw it there himself.

I am, Yours &c.

H. H. JOHNSTON.

Smithsonian Institution, Washington,

August 18, 1883.

SIRS,—On page 350 of the July number of 'The Ibis' Mr. Saunders refers to a specimen of the Cinereous Shearwater (*Puffinus kuhli*) in one of the mounted groups of the American section at the International Fisheries Exhibition, and, with reference to the locality of the specimen in question (Beyrout, Syria), suggests that "probably there has been a mistake in sorting the specimens." Having been charged with the selection and preparation of the National Museum exhibit of North-American aquatic and fish-eating birds, an explanation may be expected from me as to why this foreign specimen is included.

As may be seen upon reference to the official catalogue

which accompanies the collection, there are not a few instances where it was found necessary to represent an American species by foreign specimens, the alternative being to leave them out altogether, and it was the principal aim to exhibit as complete a collection of our water-birds as possible. In some instances we possess native specimens; but they are either unique in the collection, and therefore not to be taken out, or else not sufficiently perfect for exhibition. In the case of *Puffinus kuhli*, which has long been considered an American species (though, I now believe, incorrectly—our bird being the larger, but otherwise similar, *P. borealis*, Cory), the National Museum did not possess a specimen from the western side of the Atlantic, and consequently the one above mentioned had to be taken. It is true that a specimen of *P. borealis*, as a distinctively American species, would have answered the purpose better; but of the latter we have only one example, and unique specimens were ineligible.

In this connexion some further remarks respecting the National-Museum collection may not be without interest to the readers of 'The Ibis.'

The collection was got together on very short notice, it having been decided only at the last moment to make such an exhibit; otherwise several species not represented would have been obtained for the purpose by exchange or purchase. It should also have been stated in the catalogue that the mounted groups were put up by Mr. Henry Marshall, the taxidermist of the bird department of the U.S. National Museum, and Mr. Frederick S. Webster, of Professor Ward's establishment, in Rochester, N. Y.,—groups A, B, I, J, K, and L being the work of Mr. Marshall, and groups C to H that of Mr. Webster. The bills and feet of all the mounted specimens, however, were painted by me, from field-notes or colour-sketches made from the living or freshly killed birds, in many cases by myself, and in all cases by careful and responsible collectors. Thus, the brilliant colours of the pouch and other naked parts of the White Pelican (*P. erythrorhynchus*) are exactly those of specimens killed by me during the breeding-season at Pyramid Lake, Nevada (see Orn. 40th Parallel Exp.

pp. 634, 635), and will explain why I prefer Gmelin's name *erythrorhynchus* for this species to Latham's later one of *trachyrhynchus*. It is true that the bill and pouch are reddish only during the breeding-season, but it is equally true that the horny maxillary crest is dropped long before the colours begin to fade! The colours of the specimen of the Brown Pelican (*P. fuscus*) are those of the same individual when freshly killed, as recorded by the collector, Mr. L. Belding. These colours are materially different from those given by Audubon for the Atlantic bird, and may, in connexion with the black instead of rich seal-brown neck, indicate the specific or subspecific diversity of the Pacific-coast representative.

In conclusion, I may be pardoned for adding that, in the official catalogue of the International Exhibition, the National Museum collection of aquatic and fish-eating birds is, by some incomprehensible error, credited to "Mr. W. T. Hornaday, Washington, D.C." The gentleman named, however, had nothing to do with the collection in question except the mounting of a single specimen, the fine example of the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), the entire exhibit having been got up by myself, with the professional assistance of Mr. Marshall and Mr. Webster, as mentioned above.

Yours &c.,

ROBERT RIDGWAY,
Curator Department of Birds,
U.S. National Museum.

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.,
August 25, 1883.

SIRS,—I beg to call your attention to the enclosed circular invitation, addressed to a large number of American ornithologists. The responses received thus far have been prompt, cordial, and unanimously favourable to the proposition; and there is every prospect of the successful establishment of the organization, the character and purposes of which are so fully set forth in the invitation that I need not say more. May we not look for recognition and encourage-

ment from the older organization of similar character in England?

Yours &c.,
ELLIOTT COUES.

(*Enclosure.*)

“A. O. U.

“Cambridge and Washington,
August 1, 1883.

“To

“DEAR SIR:—

“You are cordially invited to attend a convention of *American Ornithologists*, to be held in New York City, beginning on September 26, 1883, for the purpose of founding an AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, upon a basis similar to that of the 'British Ornithologists' Union.' The place of meeting will be announced hereafter.

“The object of the Union will be the promotion of social and scientific intercourse between American Ornithologists, and their cooperation in whatever may tend to the advancement of ornithology in North America. A special object, which it is expected will at once engage the attention of the Union, will be the revision of the current lists of North-American birds, to the end of adopting a uniform system of classification and nomenclature, based on the views of a majority of the Union, and carrying the authority of the Union. Other important matters will be doubtless presented for consideration at the first meeting.

“It is proposed to hold meetings at least once annually, at such times and places as may be hereafter determined, for the reading of papers, the discussion of such matters as may be brought before the Union, and the transaction of the usual business of a scientific society.

“Those who attend the first meeting will be considered *ipso facto* Founders of the American Ornithologists' Union. Active and Corresponding Members may be elected in due course after organization of the Union, under such rules as

may be established for increase of membership. Details of organization will be considered at the first meeting.

“Should you favour this proposition, and propose to attend the first meeting, please so signify to any one of the undersigned.

“J. A. ALLEN,
Cambridge, Mass.,
Editor of the Nuttall Bulletin.

“ELLIOTT COUES,
Washington, D.C.,
Assoc. Editor of the Nuttall Bulletin.

“WILLIAM BREWSTER,
Cambridge, Mass.,
President of the Nuttall Club.”

[On the part of the Members of the B. O. U. we need hardly say that we tender to the A. O. U. our most cordial good wishes for their success.—EDD.]

Birds of Bering Island.—The recently issued sheets of the ‘Proceedings of the U.S. National Museum’ contain some very interesting letters from Mr. L. Stejneger, with an account of his expedition to Bering Island, well known as the former home of the extinct *Rhytina stelleri*. Mr. Stejneger arrived at Gavan, the harbour of Bering Island, on the 7th of May last year (*viâ* San Francisco), and after a short visit to Petropaulovski (where he met with Dr. B. Dybowski) returned to Bering Island, and made an excursion round its shores, where in one locality *Rissa brevirostris* was found in large flocks. The general *facies* of the land-fauna is pronounced to be Palearctic. The total number of species recognized up to the date of the letter amounted to sixty-one, without counting those collected in Petropaulovski; and besides these Mr. Stejneger had observed about ten species of which no specimens had been secured. Among the latter were *Sterna longipennis*, Temm., of which only four pairs had bred on the island; but *Sterna aleutica* was looked for in vain. Upon the whole the poverty of representatives of the subfamilies Sterninae and Larinae was very noticeable.

The correct Name of the American Cow-bird.—The name for the Cow-bird now proposed to be used by the American ornithologists is "*Molothrus ater* (Bodd.), Gray" (see Coues's Check-list, ed. 2, p. 63, 1882, and Ridgw. P. U. S. N. M. iii. p. 182); but I believe it should remain *M. pecoris* (Gm.), as heretofore generally written. On reference to Boddacrt's Table, p. 37, it will be observed that he does not propose to give a new name, "*Oriolus ater*," to Daubenton's "*Troupiale de la Caroline*" (Pl. Enl. 606. fig. 1), but merely quotes (as a synonym of Daubenton's figure) "*Oriolus ater*, Black Oriole, Lath. Birds, i. p. 445. n. 337." But the synonym is incorrect, for Latham's "Black Oriole" is quite another bird. Moreover, when Boddacrt intends to make an original name he usually adds after it the word "mili." Therefore I contend that it is, at all events, *doubtful* whether Boddacrt intended to give a new name in this case, and that the scientific name of the Cow-bird should remain *Molothrus pecoris*.—*P. L. Selater.*

New Collections from Emin Bey.—Dr. Hartlaub writes that he has just received from Emin Bey, the governor of the Egyptian equatorial provinces, a new collection of birds, made in the country east of the Bahr el Djebel. Amongst other novelties there are examples in it of a fine new species of Wryneck (*Iynx*) and of the rare Certhiine form *Hylypsornis salvadorii*, originally discovered in Benguela, the occurrence of which in Central Africa (as being so nearly akin to the Himalayan *Salpornis*) might have been anticipated.

Discoveries in East-African Ornithology.—Dr. Fischer, who started on an expedition into the interior from Mombas early this year, is stated to have returned to the coast, after penetrating far into the unknown district to the west and north-west of Kilimandjaro. He is said to have remained some weeks at Lake Naivash (a sheet of water hitherto unvisited by Europeans), and to have obtained a large series of birds, of which the German ornithologists will no doubt give us a good account.

News of Zoological Travellers.—Mr. H. O. Forbes, who made such a successful expedition to Timor Laut, has

returned to England for a few months, but only to make preparations for another trip to the Moluccas and the adjacent Papuan Islands, which offer so vast a field for the energetic explorer.—Dr. O. Finsch is at present resident at Bremen, hard at work on the materials accumulated during his four years' travel in the Pacific; but he has promised to visit us in London in the course of the winter and show us his wonderful series of sketches of wild life and savage customs.—Mr. H. H. Johnston, whose letter on the *Balaniceps* is given above, is also engaged on the results of his successful expedition to S.W. Africa. His birds, among which are some of great interest, have been placed in Capt. Shelley's hands for determination.—Our friend Major C. H. T. Marshall, now resident in the little Hill-State of Chumba, adjacent to Cashmere, has discovered a new Monaul (*Lophophorus*), of which we shall give a figure in our next number. He also promises us an early article upon the birds of Chumba.

Obituary.—ADRIAN LUIS JEAN FRANCISCO SUMICHRAST, an able naturalist and collector, well known to the scientific world, died on the 26th of September, 1882, after a short illness, and in the fifty-fourth year of his age, at Tonala (Chiapas), Mexico.

Professor Sumichrast, although for thirty years a resident in Mexico, to the study of the natural history and antiquities of which country he devoted much of his attention, was a European by birth, having been born on the 15th of October, 1828, at Yvorne (Canton du Vaud), Switzerland. He was a member of the Société des Sciences Naturelles du Canton du Vaud, of La Sociedad Mexicana de Geografia, of the Société Zoologique de France, of the Entomological Society of Philadelphia, &c., and a valued and active correspondent of the Smithsonian Institution, of the Cambridge Museum of Comparative Zoology, and of several other noted scientific institutions ('American Naturalist,' vol. xvii. p. 904). Prof. Sumichrast is well known to ornithologists as the author of an excellent memoir on the geographical distribution of the native birds of the department of Vera Cruz, published in the Memoirs of the Boston Society of Natural History, vol. i. pp. 542-563 (1869).